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More Albany History.

On January 4, 1905, the Hon. EDGAR TRUMAN BRACKETT, then best known by his intimate personal and political relations with the Hon. B. B. ODELL, JR., introduced into the State Senate a measure to amend the corporation law of this State by prohibiting campaign contributions by corporations, either domestic or foreign. The Brackett bill also proposed an investigation into previous contributions to political funds by corporations.

The next day ex-Governor B. B. ODELL, Jr., chairman of the Republican State Committee, came to this city and gave out an interview which was thus reported in the *Tribune* of January 6:

"I heartily agree with that [the Brackett] bill. I don't care what it is going to affect, however, so far as I know, the corporations have never contributed to a Republican campaign. If they have I never have seen the money."

Was there a particular stress laid upon the last and most striking sentence in this utterance? Was there a meaning in these words lost to the reporter, lost to the public but not quite lost to the persons for whom it was intended? Does this meaning become more patent when set against the recent interview of Colonel GEORGE W. DUNN, ex-Governor ODELL'S predecessor as chairman of the State committee and ex-Senator THOMAS C. PLATT'S political representative? Only a few days ago, when the subject of campaign contributions was mentioned at Albany, Colonel DUNN and publicly:

As chairman of the committee I received thousands of contributions, and could not say if the bridge companies added to our campaign funds. Nor could I deny it."

In the same month that the Brackett bill was introduced the Hon. ALFRED R. PAGE introduced in the State Senate a measure providing for a legislative investigation of the gas business of New York city. The resolution, as was a matter of public knowledge then, came from the Hon. B. B. ODELL, JR. Despite this substantial endorsement its progress toward passage was not rapid. Such ardent ODELL supporters as the Hon. EDGAR TRUMAN BRACKETT were conspicuous in the opposition. So slight was the progress of the measure that in a caucus of Republican Senators on March 10 Mr. PAGE said:

"I have no intention of serving as a hindrance to this bill. It has come up for some one else to shoot."

As a document which seems to have obvious relation to those indicated above we again refer to the declaration made by the Hon. HARVEY D. HINMAN on May 4, 1905, explaining his vote against the 50 cent gas bill:

"This English critic is perhaps right in estimating as VICTOR HUGO's supreme achievement the imposition of his own valuation of himself upon his public; the creation of a general feeling that VICTOR HUGO was so great and good that whatever he did must necessarily be right because he did it." In respect of turpitude, however, there is an important distinction between the forging of a false or exaggerated reputation by the conscious and politic exercise of the arts of self-advertisement and the achievement of a similar result by uncontrollable vanity working unconsciously through a romantic imagination. Mr. GRIBBLE will find in the "Choses Vues" a fabricated incident beautifully typical of the latter process.

VICTOR HUGO, back in France in 1851, is returning from a visit to THIERS at Versailles:

At 6 o'clock I started for Paris.

"In the train were two young officers fresh from Saint Cyr and a young woman with a young man, probably her husband. She was reading a paper, probably the *Edifice*, in which was a caricature of HUGO by GIZA. I was looking at a severe and the woods of Meudon. Suddenly the young woman pointed to a line in the paper and said: 'Ah! a home here, VICTOR HUGO.' Then he said, 'The young man, he is there.' And he pointed me out discreetly. The young woman took my hat, which was in the rack, and laid the cap on it, and then said to me:

"You have suffered greatly, sir. Continue to defend the vanquisher. Then she left."

I kissed her hand. She was a charming creature and had beautiful eyes.

I assisted her to descend from the train at Paris and after saluting her we lost ourselves in the crowd."

Herein is the key to the psychology of a thousand passages in VICTOR HUGO'S statements of personal experience which, from the Gribeauval point of view, prove his unscrupulous mendacity in the matter of self-gloryification. Of course the ridiculous incident never occurred. It was VICTOR HUGO who was reading the *Edifice* containing the mention of himself. It was the young woman who was looking with her beautiful eyes at Sérès at the woods of Meudon. The poet observed her and wondered what she would do if the tremendous fact of

the Passing of Sandy Hill.

Another old fashioned New York village is to lose its time honored name. Sandy Hill, in Washington county, is to become Hudson Falls. Last week the

proximity became known to the charming creature. His imagination had pictured her throwing herself at his feet in the compartment and clasping his knees in a frenzy of admiration and gratitude. Then it seemed to him that it might be better if she merely took his hat from the rack, kissed it, and quietly wept. This would be a new form of homage, not at all conventional and well adapted to literary use. While the great poet was still refining this possible incident the train reached Paris; he helped her down and that was all. There were no actual kisses, either of husbands or of hands. There was no weeping. There was not even any recognition. But when VICTOR HUGO went to his desk that night the alchemy of genius had transmuted what might have happened in the train into what did occur, and as such the story became a part of his autobiography. Is not this very different from deliberate misrepresentation for a purpose, from "lying," as Mr. GRIBBLE would say?

The Comoro Islands lie to the northwest of Madagascar, within easy reach of the mainland of Africa and the southern boundary of German East Africa. There are four of them, Grand Comoro, Moheli, Johanna and Mayotta, with an area of about 500 square miles and a population of 63,000. They are very fertile and the people are chiefly Swahili, the most intelligent and active in East Africa. In the buccaneering days they were a nest for European pirates, and piracy was long kept up by the natives themselves.

Zanzibar to the north in British hands and the Comoros to the south in French; limits to German colonial expansion in East Africa, and WILHELM II. must possess his soul in peace.

The Victor Hugo Legend.

In the current number of the *Fortnightly Review* Mr. FRANCIS GRIBBLE is worse than unphilosophical. In his treatment of VICTOR HUGO'S known weaknesses this critic displays something like personal hatred or execration. This leads him, when discussing the methods by which that colossal egotism gradually built up for public contemplation a majestic ideal of VICTOR HUGO, to attribute to the poet a conscious art or artfulness and a deliberate, cold-blooded mendacity. Mr. GRIBBLE seems to ignore the element of self-deception, so common in cases where imaginative genius of a high order coexists with an extreme degree of personal vanity. For example, with respect to VICTOR HUGO'S pretensions to noble lineage

"VICTOR HUGO was a liar, at least he lied sufficiently. His first lies relate to his family history. Noble ancestors, he felt, were essential to his sublimity, and as he had none he invented some, giving out that he was a scion of the house of the Huoses of Lorraine, and a great grandson of CHARLES HYACINTHE HUGO, chevalier, comte, maître en la chambre des Comptes de Lorraine." It is not true. All the descendants of CHARLES HYACINTHE HUGO, chevalier, &c., have been traced, and VICTOR HUGO is not included in their number. VICTOR HUGO'S descendants have been traced, and no chevalier is to be found among them. His father was an officer who had risen from the ranks, his grandfather was a carpenter, his great grandfather and his great-great grandfather were peasants. Of the women whom they married the most distinguished was a nursery governess. Among the collaterals we find a corn factor, a baker, a barber and three dressmakers—useful and even honorable members of the community, but not either aristocratic or romantic, so that our first true glimpse of VICTOR HUGO is of a plebian, dissatisfied with his humble origin, perching himself on the branches of another man's family tree, and successfully persuading his admirers that he had every right to be there."

A more tolerant analyst of human character than Mr. FRANCIS GRIBBLE would have recognized the obvious possibility, even probability, that this masterly dreamer of dreams began by persuading himself that he had every right to perch on that family tree. No prodigies of self-delusion is required to make this plausible.

Mr. PARKER'S Glorious Reputation.

The Hon. RICHARD WAYNE PARKER of the Seventh New Jersey district, a member of the Committee on Military Affairs, did an unusually courageous thing in the House on Friday last, and because of its character this incident should not go unnoticed.

A provision of the army appropriation bill to retire five Brigadier-Generals with the rank and pay of Major-General, following a precedent by which some other officers profited, was before the House. It had a good deal of support, sentiment of the conventional patriotic order being strong for it. Whereupon

Mr. PARKER:

"I know some of these gentlemen, and I love them and admire them as officers and for themselves. But so far from being a discrimination against them if this amendment be rejected, it is a discrimination in favor of them if the amendment be accepted. There are hundreds of salient officers upon the retired list, not only Brigadier Generals but Majors and Colonels, and there are thousands of others who served throughout the war who are on no retired list whatever, and are equally entitled to our kindness. They are indeed men who have given as long and gallant a service as any officers have had."

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Mr. PARKER was reminded that he had voted for a similar measure, the act of March, 1907, and he was taxed with inconsistency:

Mr. SELIGSON—Why does the gentleman vote against an identical provision in this bill?

Mr. PARKER—Because I repeated the moment I had voted for that act.

Upon the merits of the question there may be a difference of opinion. Discrimination must be admitted, and bids creating special rank for army officers with additional pay are often backed by recommendations solicited by influential friends, if not by the officers themselves.

At the same time, the officers for whom preference was asked on this occasion had served their country well. That being said, we claim for the Hon. RICHARD WAYNE PARKER the distinction of standing for principle as he saw it and admitting an error of judgment that exposed him to a charge few public men care to face. Such displays of moral courage are rare in Congress.

Some one suggested that the street was too small to be worthy of so great a poet and that the honor of bearing his name ought to be as signed to some more important thoroughfare.

Then they proceeded to enumerate the more popular quarters of Paris, in an ascending scale until one man exclaimed with enthusiasm that it would be an honor for the city of Paris itself to be renamed after the man of genius.

Hugo, leaning against the masterpiece, leaned complacently to his listeners, outdid each other. Then, with the air of one engaged in deep thought, he turned to the young man and said to him in his grand style:

"Even that will come, my friend. Even that will come."

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Another old fashioned New York village is to lose its time honored name. Sandy Hill, in Washington county, is to become Hudson Falls. Last week the

President sent to the Senate among the nominations of postmasters the name of JOHN DWYER for postmaster at Hudson Falls. Mr. DWYER is the present postmaster at Sandy Hill. As yet there is no such village as Hudson Falls. The people of Sandy Hill are to vote upon the proposed change of name on March 15. A despatch from the village says that the residents have practically agreed upon the new designation although the formal vote has not been taken. Such a vote is necessary under the general law of Virginia, which permits the name of a village to be changed only upon the adoption of a proposition to that effect at an annual election. The statute further provides that "the proposition must contain the proposed new name and be accompanied by the written consent of the Postmaster-General, Vice and Deputy Consuls, Consuls, agents and subordinate officials, yet the net cost of maintenance last year was only about \$250,000. The gross cost was a little over \$220,000, while the fees collected and paid into the Federal Treasury amounted to about \$10,000.

The year book of the Department of Agriculture for 1908 shows the average farm price of corn on December 1 of that year as 60 cents a bushel and the average December 1 price for the period 1898-1905 as 37 cents. On the same basis wheat shows an advance from 64 cents to 92.8 cents, oats from 28.1 cents to 47.2 cents, barley from 41.2 cents to 53.5 cents, rye from 32.5 cents to 33.8 cents, and potatoes from 19.9 cents to 20.6 cents. These are given as "farm prices." Comparatively little of the butter supply comes from the farm directly and its farm price is not given. The "mean farm price of eggs" is given as 11.15 cents a dozen in 1898 and 18.3 cents in 1908. In his report for 1909 Secretary Wilson says:

"In the unacted amendment of next session the farmer has not shared equally with the market, wholesaler and retail dealer. His raw cattle are barely as valuable as they were nine to fourteen years ago. With regard to hogs the case is different. The farmer has received nearly his fair share of the higher prices."

Tables similar to those from which the foregoing figures are taken show an advance of about 30 per cent. in the price of tobacco in ten years and about 50 per cent. in the price of raw cotton. This may not be what Mr. Wilson regards as a "substantial change" in farm prices, but his view will not be endorsed by those who pay. In this comment there is no intent to criticize the farmers or to charge them with extortion. The figures, taken from official records, tell their own story. If the price of foodstuffs is to be investigated fairly the farmer must take the stand as well as the trusts, the tariff and the transportation companies, the middleman and the retailer. His place and influence must be shown as well as those of the increase in gold supply.

The work and the worth of American Consuls are now measured chiefly by commercial standards. They are required to keep the State Department informed with regard to trade and trade conditions in the region of their posts and to use all proper means for the advancement of American trade. Our exporters and importers call upon them, directly or through the Department, for special information. Continuance in the service developed and found favor with numerous trade associations throughout the country. This led to the movement that resulted in the approval in April, 1906, of the Root Lodge bill for the reorganization of the service.

Under the terms of the proposed amendment income derived from all United States bonds will also be taxed by Congress. It matters not that exemption from Federal taxation is stipulated in the statutes authorizing the issue of some of those bonds. The amendment will supersede those statutes, and the distinction between the income and its source will again be disregarded.

It is unlikely that the work of American Consuls will be affected by the proposed amendment.

More and more the consular services are being converted into an aggressive agency for trade expansion.

SECRETARY WILSON ON FARM PRICES.

WASHINGTON, March 2.—Secretary Wilson is reported as having told the Senate committee now engaged in investigating the increased cost of foodstuffs that "there has been no substantial change in the prices obtained by the farmer for his food products during the last ten years. If such a statement was made it is contradicted by the official records of the Department of which Mr. Wilson is the esteemed and efficient chief. The figures for the year just closed are not at hand, but the farm prices for commodities in 1908 were certainly not lower than they were in 1908, and the figures of 1908 may be used as a basis of comparison."

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